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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/415,781	10/08/1999	ZAFAR LQBAL	050-99-037	5292

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EXAMINER

DOVE, TRACY MAE

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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1745

DATE MAILED: 06/09/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

AS-11

Office Action Summary

Application No.
09/415,781

Applicant(s)
Iqbal et al.

Examiner
Tracy Dove

Art Unit
1745



-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136 (a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on Sep 21, 2001
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11; 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-25 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above, claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 3, 12, and 23 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1, 2, 4-11, 13-22, 24, and 25 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claims _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgement is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
*See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e).
a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s). _____ 6) ☐ Other:

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DETAILED ACTION

This Office Action is in response to the communication filed on 9/21/01. Applicant's arguments have been considered, but are moot in view of the new grounds of rejection. Claims 1, 2, 4-11, 13-22, 24 and 25 are rejected. Claims 3, 12 and 23 are directed toward allowable subject matter. This Action is made Non-Final.

Specification

The objection to the specification has been withdrawn.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

All 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, rejections have been withdrawn.

Double Patenting

Due to the abandonment of application 09/415,466 the double patenting rejection has been withdrawn. Note that a petition to revive application 09/415,466 has been received, and if the petition is granted, the double patenting rejection will be reinstated.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

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A person shall be entitled to a patent unless -

(e) the invention was described in a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent, or on an international application by another who has fulfilled the requirements of paragraphs (1), (2), and (4) of section 371© of this title before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent.

The changes made to 35 U.S.C. 102(e) by the American Inventors Protection Act of 1999 (AIPA) do not apply to the examination of this application as the application being examined was not (1) filed on or after November 29, 2000, or (2) voluntarily published under 35 U.S.C. 122(b). Therefore, this application is examined under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) prior to the amendment by the AIPA (pre-AIPA 35 U.S.C. 102(e)).

Claims 1, 2, 4-11, 13-22, 24 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Yoshimura et al., US 6,291,094.

Yoshimura teaches an inexpensive and corrosion resistant metal-made gas separator for a fuel cell including a base, a first coating layer and a second coating layer. See abstract. The separator has a metallic base member, a first coating layer covering at least a portion of a surface of the base member (the first coating layer being formed from a first electrically conductive material) and a second coating layer covering at least a face where the first coating layer is formed (the second coating layer being formed from a second electrically conductive material different from the first electrically conductive material). See col. 2, lines 1-14. The second electrically conductive material may be a carbon material, such as thermal expansion graphite (col. 2, lines 40-42). The base member is coated with an electrically conductive material other

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than carbon and with a carbon material so that a sufficiently high corrosion resistance can be achieved (col. 2, lines 15-20). The first coating layer may have a rough surface to increase the adhesion strength between the first coating layer and the second coating layer (bonds together). See col. 3, lines 1-5. The metal of the base sheet may be aluminum (col. 8, lines 29-45: claim 2). Thermal expansion graphite is a type of exfoliated graphite (col. 9, lines 23-50: claim 5). The first coating layer preferably has a rough surface including irregularities such as protrusions and recesses (col. 12, lines 63-66: claim 6). The second coating layer secures a sufficiently high corrosion resistance of the separator due to the prevention of micro-holes in the first coating layer (col. 7, lines 48-52 and col. 8, lines 21-25). The second coating layer may be formed by pressing a carbon sheet (foil) on the first coating layer (col. 6, lines 50-67: claim 7). Graphite is an electrically conductive material (claim 9). The graphite coating is hydrophobic (claim 10). Flow fields are shown by Figs. 1 and 4 (claims 18). If the same graphite material as that used to form the second coating layer is taken up into the first coating layer, the contact area between the layer is increased and the contact resistance is decreased (col. 11, lines 3-9). Yoshimura teaches the first coating layer includes graphite (claim 4, 14).

Thus, the claims are anticipated.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claim 23 is allowed.

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Claims 3 and 12 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

The following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter: the claims are directed toward a coated fuel cell bipolar plate. The plate is coated with a first layer and a second layer. Claim 3 requires that the first layer is an electrically conductive coating of a graphite emulsion (interpreted as “consisting of a graphite emulsion”). Claims 12 and 23 recite a specific thickness of the second layer (corrosion resistant layer).

Yoshimura teaches a separator plate for a fuel cell having a first coating layer and a second coating layer. However, Yoshimura does not teach that the first layer consists of a graphite emulsion and the second layer includes graphite. Yoshimura teaches away from claim 3 because the reference states the “base member is coated with an electrically conductive material other than carbon” (col. 2, lines 15-20). Thus while Yoshimura teaches the first coating layer may contain graphite (carbon material), the reference teaches that the layer must include an electrically conductive material other than carbon. See discussion of Yoshimura above. Yoshimura is silent regarding the thickness of the first and/or second coating layers.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Tracy Dove whose telephone number is (703) 308-8821. The Examiner


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may normally be reached Monday-Thursday (9:00 AM-7:30 PM). My supervisor is Pat Ryan, who can be reached at (703) 308-2383. The Art Unit receptionist can be reached at (703) 308-0661 and the official fax numbers are 703-872-9310 (after non-final) and 703-872-9311 (after final).

October 28, 2002


CAROL CHANEY
PRIMARY EXAMINER